

THE PRAGMATIC MOTIVATION FOR THE PASSIVE  
IN CLASSICAL SANSKRIT

1 INTRODUCTION

Functionalists generally agree on the fact that the pragmatic level is more basic than the semantic and syntactic level; this means that the pragmatic functions (topic, focus...) have already been assigned before the semantic (agent, patient, recipient...) and syntactic functions (subject, object) are determined.

So — to come to the issue under discussion in this paper — when a language disposes of several voices (as indeed classical Sanskrit does), there must be some sort of explanation for that as both voices cannot be functionally equal. Voice simply cannot be treated as an isolated, purely syntactic or even semantic phenomenon, at least not when one aspires to say something about the way in which a language functions. When a speaker opts for a certain voice, this decision is not made arbitrarily.

What I wanted to find out really, was in which circumstances a speaker uses an active sentence and in which circumstances he prefers a passive one. In order to find an answer to this question, I went through a good deal of articles on this subject, I picked out the most plausible theories and confronted them with my corpus. I extracted my corpus sentences, i.e. 100 active and 100 passive sentences from the novel *Daśakumāracaritam* of Daṇḍin, a text

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which, I believe, is relatively free from standard style conventions and which treats a subject that allows a varied text structure. I confined myself to the finite verb forms.

As for the passives, I have noted down some instances of passive aorists and of passives in the future and perfective tenses which can't be distinguished from the medial forms on formal grounds.

The lion's share, however, is taken by the *-yá* passives.

The parameters that I 'll discuss below in section 2 are ordered according to their importance for my corpus. Successively, I 'll talk about lexical and syntactic priming (2.1); animacy, definiteness and empathy which I classify together under the name absolute features (2.2); topic and focus to which I refer with the term relational features (2.3) and finally cohesion (2.4).

Quite surprisingly, not one of these factors gave me a clear picture of the use of the passive voice, nor did a combination of a number of them provide a sufficient and satisfactory explanation.

So, I was sort of forced to drop the idea that in classical Sanskrit the choice of the voice can be entirely explained in terms of pragmatics and I had to turn to another plausible solution which I 'll communicate in section 3.

## 2 PARAMETERS

### 2.1 *Lexical & syntactic priming*

Inspired by psycholinguists, D. Estival (1985) points out that not only lexical and semantic priming can be significant factors for the comprehension and production of the discourse but that also syntactic priming can be of major importance. This means that language users (especially in the spoken discourse) are often inclined to repeat not only the same words (i.e. lexical priming) but also the same syntactic structures (i.e. syntactic priming).

Weiner & Labov (1983) came to the conclusion that if the speaker has the choice between either voice, it is more likely for him to opt for the passive alternant if there is a passive in the immediate discourse preceding the sentence (up to 5 sentences back) than in the case where there is no preceding passive.

Expressed in terms of figures, in my corpus 26 passives in a total of 100 have actually been preceded by a passive construction. Mind you that I 've only taken the finite verb forms into account. It seems to me that this is too small a number to call syntactic priming a decisive factor but, then again it is too big a number to ignore. One thing is for sure, it is not easy to assess the real influence of such a parameter, partly because it often occurs in interaction with the factor 'contrast'. Consider example 1:

(i) *tatra snātaś ca... bhīmarūpeṇa brahmarākṣaseṇābhipatyā... nirbhartsayatābhyadhīye/*

(ii) *nirbhayeṇa ca mayā sa 'bhyadhīyata/*

«And having bathed, I was addressed in a threatening way by a Brahmarākṣasa with a ghastly figure who had knocked against me. And he was addressed by me without fear».

In both cases the principal verb is a passive form of *abhidhā* but there is a change in perspective. As for the order of words, one gets two more or less parallel constructions in which the agent is carrying the focus. In the first sentence the agent as opposed to the subject is overtly expressed, it is new in the information structure and very salient for the rest of the discourse. As a consequence, in sentence (ii) the accent also falls on the agent because of the contrast (although the B. is threatening, I am without fear). Remarkable is also the combination of lexical and syntactic priming in this example (2 times *abhidhā*), which according to D. Estival (1985:12) has a special power:

«Using the same verb again within a short period of time might lead speakers to use the same morphological form of the verb and reinforce whatever tendency there could be to use the same voice. In other words, lexical priming might increase the effect of syntactic priming or even completely account for it.»

## 2.2. Absolute features

I classify definiteness, animacy and empathy in one section because of their strong mutual correlation. The main reason why I speak of absolute features is that they are not only a matter of pragmatics, they can be inherent to the constituents too. They are

more or less situated on the borderline between semantics and pragmatics.

### 2.2.1 *Definiteness*

According to Chafe (1976) there are a number of phenomena (e.g. def. vs. indef.; given vs. new) that deal with 'how' a speaker passes on a message and not with the message itself. He refers to these phenomena with the term 'packaging phenomena'.

When the speaker decides to make a constituent definite, he supposes that the hearer will have no problem at all to identify the referent. To be able to do that, it is not necessary that the hearer actually knows the referent. Chafe suggests to use the term 'identifiable' instead of the more commonly used but vaguer term 'definite'.

As for the codification, languages may vary widely. Some dispose of a definite article, others express definiteness in combination with other features. Still others have no open category at their disposal. In Sanskrit, definiteness can but needn't be indicated by the use of the personal (*tad/etad*) or the demonstrative (*idam/adas*) pronoun, so, it partially belongs to the second and to the third group. In case definiteness is not overtly expressed, one is dependent on the context. Whether a constituent is definite or not is generally obvious for there is often a correlation between the status given and definite on the one hand and new and indefinite on the other hand, although this is certainly not a blanket-rule.

Sometimes the interpretator of a Sanskrit text has to speculate on the status of a non-given constituent because the combination definite-new cannot be excluded on a priori grounds.

As it happens, a speaker can assume that the hearer will be able to identify an element although it is new in the information structure. Because of the speculative factor in the decision, one has to take the figures in table 1 and 2 with a pinch of salt. It is obvious that the agents in the active and the patients in the passive sentences that are not overtly expressed but that are represented in the verbal morphology, have automatically been given the status 'definite'.

It is generally believed that the active structure is preferred if the agent is definite and the patient indefinite and that the passive construction is used when it is the other way round. For the sake of completeness, I have to add that no one considers definiteness as a sufficient condition to decide on the voice. It is quite clear that it can only play a role in interaction with other factors.

Table 1: definiteness: the number of agents and patients in my corpus that are characterized by the feature definiteness.

active		passive	
ag.	pat.	pat.	ag.
96	64	82	78

Table 1 doesn't reveal all that much. It shows that the patient-subject is 18 times indefinite whereas the agent-subject is only 4 times indefinite and that the difference in definiteness between patient and agent in the passive clauses is trifling.

Table 2: relative relations

		active	passive	total
1) ag.+def.	pat.+def.	62	67	129
2) ag.+def.	pat.-def.	34	11	45
3) ag.-def.	pat.+def.	2	15	17
4) ag.-def.	pat.-def.	2	7	9
		100	100	

With equal specification, you notice a slight preference for the passive, i.e. in line 1: 62 vs. 67 and in line 4: 2 vs. 7. With unequal specification, the constituents characterised by the feature +def. tend to become subject, i.e. in line 2: 34 out of 45 and in line 3: 15 out of 17. You record a deviation towards the passive: 11 in a total of 45 cases with ag.+def. and pat.-def. (i.e. 24.4.%) do prefer the passive voice in spite of the factor +def. for the agent and -def. for the patient. In a total of 17 cases with ag.-def. and pat.+def., i.e. where one would expect a passive, one gets the active in only 2 cases. So in total there are 13 cases that go against the hypothesis

of which 11 (i.e. 84.6%) have a passive form.

In short, both tables show us that the active sentences confirm more or less the hypothesis put forward above and that definiteness can hardly be called a decisive factor for passivisation.

### 2.2.2 Animacy

Comrie (1981) speaks of animacy as an extralinguistical conceptual property. There are a number of formal ways to express animacy, varying from languages that codify this distinction quite accurately to languages that almost entirely neglect this aspect. The animacy hierarchy can be presented as follows:

human > animate > inanimate

One could say that the higher a constituent ranges on that hierarchy, the more chance it stands to be selected as a subject of a sentence; that is a human constituent is more likely to be chosen as a subject than an inanimate one.

Table 3: animacy: the number of agents and patients that are characterised by the feature +human.

active		passive	
ag.	pat.	pat.	ag.
93	40	58	77

This table gives the percentage of participants that bear the feature +human. I 've only noted down one case where humanness and animateness didn't coincide. In one of my passive corpus sentences, it was a snake that performed the action. In the active sentences you notice a clear preference to select the elements that bear the feature +human as subjects. This particular preference doesn't seem to be at work in the passive sentences.

Table 4: relative relations

		active	passive	total
1) ag.+hum.	pat.+hum.	38	47	85
2) ag.+hum.	pat.-hum.	55	30	85
3) ag.-hum.	pat.+hum.	2	11	13
4) ag.-hum.	pat.-hum.	5	12	17
		100	100	

With equal specification, you see a clear preference for the passive, i.e. line 1: 38 vs. 47 and line 4: 5 vs. 12. With unequal specification, the constituent, characterized by the feature +hum. tends to be subject. Once again, we get a serious deviation towards the passive: 30 out of 85 cases with ag.+hum. and pat.-hum. (i.e. 35.3%) do become passive in spite of the feature ag.+hum. and pat.-hum. As for the 13 cases (line 3) with ag.-hum. and pat.+hum., there is only a deviation in 2 cases. So in a total of 32 cases that go against the hypothesis, 30 take a passive form (i.e. 93%).

Mind you that these results here don't particularly surprise me. After all, an action expressed by a verb that can take 2 or 3 arguments, is usually brought about by an entity (preferably +human or +animate) and this property is not lost when passivizing.

### 2.2.3 Empathy

In an article, written by Kuno in 1976 (p. 431), we find the following description for the term empathy:

*«I use the term empathy to characterize the speaker's identification in varying degrees with a participant in an event.»*

The more a speaker feels involved with or rather empathizes with a participant in an event, the easier it is for him to push the constituent that refers to that particular participant forward as the theme. An investigation, done by Kuno and Kaburaki in 1975, shows that the interaction between empathy and syntax is con-

trolled by four principles of which I reproduce only one here, in casu 'the speech act participant hierarchy':

*speaker (1st person) > hearer (2nd person) > 3rd person*<sup>1</sup>

That first and second persons, whatever the right order is, are ranged before the third persons is obvious for a speaker will have more difficulties to identify himself with a third party with exclusion of himself and the hearer. Now since my corpustext is narrative prose, the third person participants hold the majority. In spite of that, one can distinguish some clear tendencies, especially in the active sentences.

Table 5: empathy

	1st	2nd	3rd	total
ag.subj.	33	8	59	100
ag.non subj.	13	22	52	87
	5 8	2 20	39 13	
pat.subj.	13	1	85	99
pat.non subj.	6	4	88	98

Before proceeding with the discussion, 4 more points have to be added here that are important with respect to a clear appreciation of the table:

— under ag.non subj. you get two figures: the first figure (i.e. 5, 2 and 39) shows how many agents have been overtly expressed and the second figure how many agents have not been overtly expressed.

— In the passive sentences the agent is either irrelevant or unknown 13 times; the agent is 46 times overtly expressed and 41

1. I must add here that in the international literature, this hierarchy has been called into question several times (cf.). It has been discussed at large especially in articles dealing with split ergativity. The problem from a crosslinguistic point of view is whether the first person should be ranged before the second person or vice versa.



times known by the discourse.

— I have recorded one case of impersonal passive, so one pat. subj. is missing (the total is 99).

— In the active sentences the patient was 2 times not expressed within the sentence, so the total here is 98.

What is important about this table is that it reveals that the agent often is not overtly expressed in the passive sentences. In 13 cases the agent is either irrelevant or simply unknown. One could say that the action itself has been focused upon and that the identity of the participants concerned was unimportant at the moment of the utterance. Kirsner (1976:389) speaks of '*high participants not focused*' in this respect. This very author points out that there is still a third possibility, i.e. the agent is known to the speaker but he withholds it for one reason or another, with other words: the agent demotion is functional (cfr. 2.3 p. 14). In most cases it's quite easy to decide on the relevance of the agent but it's much harder to determine whether the agent was known to the speaker or not. Since in Sanskrit one can deduct the person and number from the verbal morphology so that an explicit expression is not required when it is clear from the context to whom the subject refers, one cannot claim that the passive is used to avoid unnecessary repetition of the agent. The active and passive construction are equally economical in this respect although there is a difference as for information.

Table 6: relative relations

		active	passive	total
1) ag.1st	pat.3rd	31	13	44
2) ag.3rd	pat.1st	4	11	15
1) ag.1st	pat.2nd	2	—	2
2) ag.2nd	pat.1st	2	1	3
1) ag.2nd	pat.3rd	6	21	27
2) ag.3rd	pat.2nd	2	1	3
ag.3rd	pat.3rd	51	39	90

Line 1 always gives the expected pattern for the active sentences and line 2 for the passive sentences. The rules of empathy are followed in 142 cases (31+11+2+1+6+1+90) and violated in 42 cases (13+4+2+21+2) i.e. in 22.8%. On this total of 42 we register 34 cases of deviation towards the passive (13+21), i.e. 80.9% and only 8 cases of deviation towards the active (4+4+2) or 19%.

These figures learn us that the rules of empathy are violated mainly in the passive sentences.

### 2.3 *Relational features*

By relational features I understand pairs such as topic and focus; theme and rheme; topic and comment; given and new etc. A constituent possesses these sheer pragmatical features in relation with the discourse. They are not inherent to the constituents. It has often been posited that the distribution of these pragmatical functions is determinant for the choice of the voice to a large extent. It is certainly not easy to find one's way through the Terminological confusion that is caused by the lack of consensus under the language theorists. As a result, a term such as a 'theme' may have quite a different conceptual content in different theories. I could elaborate on this subject for hours no doubt, comparing a number of theories in this respect. For economy reasons, I'll try to stick to the essence of the matter.

To escape from the circular and inadequate way of defining notions such as topic and topicality, Givón (1983) has reanalysed both of them as scalar features, he has related topicality to the cognitive notion *continuity* and he has developed a method (*quantified method*) to study them. Givón distinguishes 3 aspects of discourse continuity that span a bridge between the microorganisation of the sentence (*basic information processing unit*) and the macro-organisation of the discourse, i.e.:

- thematic continuity
  - action continuity
  - topic/ participant continuity
- } within the thematic paragraph

The theme is the most macro-oriented and hence the least coded element in the structural expression. Within the thematic

paragraph one topic normally functions as the '*Leitmotif*', i.e. the participant that is most concerned with the action running through the paragraph. The most continuous topic is then associated with the theme on a higher level of the paragraph and is encoded as the primary topic or as the grammatical subject in most part of the sequentially ordered sentences. Givón speaks of initial, medial and final topics to which he unnecessarily adds that the latter ones are automatically definite.

On the basis of numerical data from a number of languages that show that only 5 to 20% of all the affirmative, declarative headclauses are passive, Givón concludes:

*«This by itself tags the passive as a discontinuous device, by virtue of its rarity.»* (1983:23) But a little further on in the text, he states: *«while the passive is a complex, multidimensional domain, it is clear that one of its dimensions overlaps to quite an extent with our domain of topic continuity and topic identification.»*

So if I get it right, to begin with he calls the passive a *discontinuous device* (the connection between discontinuity and low frequency seems rather dubious to me anyway) and subsequently he claims that the passive appears every now and then precisely to guarantee the continuity in the discourse. I honestly don't see how these two views could be made compatible.

Now, in Functional Grammar (from now on F.G.) (cf. S.C. DIK 1978, 1983; A.M. BOLKESTEIN 1981, 1985 etc.) one makes a distinction between sentence internal and sentence external pragmatical functions. The latter are called theme (or left-dislocation) and tail (or right-dislocation) and are not integrated in the structure of the sentence. The theme constituents specify the domain within which the predication is expressed whereas the tail constituents provide further information that may be relevant for a correct interpretation of the predication. In my further discussion I will leave these two out of account, I'll merely concentrate on the two sentence internal pragmatical functions for these are more important in this study here. Topic is the entity about which information is given in the sentence and focus the entity that carries the most salient and important information in the sentence. There is not a strict dichotomy between topic and focus as you will see later on. As opposed to what Dik claimed in 1978, the

pragmatic functions are now considered as more basic than the semantic and syntactic ones (cf. DE SCHUTTER & NUYTS: 1983). For this very reason, linguists have taken an ever increasing interest in the analysis of the discourse in the last few years. One realizes that when one considers for instance the function topic, one cannot confine oneself to the level of isolated sentences. Hence, the introduction of notions such as given topic (cf. Givón's medial topic), resumed topic and new topic (cf. Givón's initial topic) and the distinction between referential and relational focus. As these names are quite transparent, I don't have to talk about them at great length. A new topic (Nt.) is one that is introduced for the first time either implicitly or explicitly and that remains available for further predication. A given topic (Gt.) is a topic that has to be kept alive by a sufficient number of references to it. These references, then form a sort of topic chain. Finally, a resumed topic (Rt.) is a topic that is reestablished, that is foregrounded again after having lost its availability for predication. According to F.G., the given topic usually prefers subject position because this position determines the perspective out of which a particular state of affairs is presented and because the given topic determines the contextual perspective out of which the discourse is organized. Taking this into account, it is only a small step to the hypothesis that a passive construction is preferred when the patient is a given topic and the agent is not.

When a speaker addresses someone, he must have some idea about the pragmatic information of that person. It will be his intention to fill up a gap in that information. Dik makes a distinction between several types of focality. He speaks of referential focality (Rf.) in the case of completive, expansive, selective, restrictive and replacive focality. Apart from these you can also have a sort of parallel focality, based on sentence internal characteristics. This is called relational focality (or contrastive focality: Cf.). Not the referent of the entity but the relation between entities is experienced as new or salient.

Topic and focus don't always exclude each other. A topical constituent can be focal but only when there is either an implicit or an explicit contrast.

As for my corpus, I checked how many agents and how many

patients had topicstatus (more in particular Nt; Gt or Rt) and how many had focusstatus (either Rf or Cf).

I've tried to find out whether there is a correlation between given, topic and subjectposition on the one hand and between new, focus and non-subject position on the other hand. In a number of cases agent and patient were neither topic nor focus, with other words, they didn't have a pragmatic function.

Table 7: relational features

*active*

ag.	topic			focus		no pragm. f.	given	new
	Gt	Rt	Nt	Rf	Cf			
	75	10	5	4	1	6	90	10
	90%			5%				

pat.	topic			focus		no pragm. f.	given	new
	Gt	Rt	Nt	Rf	Cf			
	8	0	0	65	0	25	33	65
	8%			65%				

*passive*

pat.	topic			focus		no pragm. f.	given	new
	Gt	Rt	Nt	Rf	Cf			
	47	2	3	38	14	1	54	45
	52%			52%				

ag.	topic			focus		no pragm. f.	given	new
	Gt	Rt	Nt	Rf	Cf			
	26	0	2	10	2	49	68	19
	28%			12%				

Before discussing this table into detail, I have to give some additional information in order to avoid misunderstandings. The first point is that the total is not always 100. This is due to some deficiencies in my corpus (cf. 2.2.3 p. 8). Secondly, there may be a

partial or even total overlap between topic and focus for a constituent that carries contrast and thus is focal can be topical at the same time. This explains why you sometimes arrive at more than 100%, take for example the passive pat. subj., there you get 104% in total.

Now, if you consider table 7, you will see that in the active sentences the agent subject is topical and given in 90% of the cases and focal in only 5%, whereas the patient — following the expectations — is focal and new in the majority of the cases i.e. in 65%. If you compare these figures with those below, it 'll strike you that here you don't see such a clear profile. There is no clear correlation between given, patient subject and topic on the one hand and new, non-subject and focus on the other hand.

Whereas in the active sentences, you get 90 topical vs. 5 focal subjects, you get 52 topical vs. 52 focal subjects in the passive sentences. However, one cannot claim either that topicalisation of the patient is of no importance at all. Compare the occurrence of topical patients in the active sentences (8) with the occurrence of topical patients in the passive sentences (52) and you 'll conclude that the factor 'topicalisation of the patient' cannot be bluntly ignored although one cannot easily determine its exact weight. The factor 'focalisation of the agent' on the other hand can easily be considered as completely irrelevant (the agent in the passive sentences is focal in only 12 cases).

This table also reveals that although there is a strong correlation between topic and given on the one hand and new and focus on the other hand, these notions can't be identified.

Very unusual and surprising is the number of focal patient subjects (52). Some of them (11 in casu) can be explained by means of the pragmatical factor 'politeness'. In his article *The interaction of word order and pragmatics in a Sanskrit text* (1984), WALLACE points out that the finite passive verb forms occur chiefly in the directly quoted parts of the discourse and that they are in the imperative mood quite often. According to Wallace, a speaker opts for such a form when he wants to treat the hearer with respect. This construction is exploited to bring about a certain effect upon the hearer. The speaker doesn't want the hearer to concentrate on the agent. I realise that to substantiate such a

claim, a thorough study of the imperative construction and of the direct quotes in particular are necessary.

My corpus shows that what Wallace has concluded on the basis of the *Vetālapañcaviṃśati* offers a way out only in a limited number of cases. Of the total of 100 passives, 19 are in the imperative mood of which 12 with a focalised patient subject. One of these can't be explained by the factor politeness and demotion of the agent because the order is very clearly addressed to subordinated people.

All this shows that a black and white conclusion is out of the question here and that a more nuanced formulation is required. These figures reveal a double tendency: the active sentences almost optimally correspond to the expected pattern: there is a strong interaction between topic, given and subject. The passive sentences on the other hand don't give us a clear picture of the importance of these relational features.

## 2.4 Cohesion

The notion cohesion was originally developed by BOLKESTEIN (1985a; 1985b) for a number of trivalent Latin verbs that allow objectselection, which is not the case for all trivalent or bitransitive verbs<sup>2</sup>. The choice of the secondary perspective with such verbs proved to be pragmatically motivated and as the pragmatic functions topic and focus didn't do, the notion 'cohesion' was introduced. The choice of the secondary perspective is then motivated as follows: the non-agent constituent that is most cohesive (cf. definition below) is selected as secondary perspective and consequently gets the syntactic function object.

One can logically assume that if cohesion is highly important for the choice of the secondary perspective (i.e. objectselection)

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2. In F.G. subject and object are defined as the primary and secondary perspective respectively from which a state of affairs is presented. In Sanskrit a passive construction results when the patient or recipient is selected as the point of departure for describing the state of affairs, in that case the syntactic function subject is assigned to the patient or recipient.

that it also plays a major role in the choice of the primary perspective (i.e. subjectselection).

Bolkestein & Risselada confirm this in their paper *The pragmatic motivation of syntactic and semantic perspective* (t.a.) in which they argue that the decision of a speaker or author to present a state of affairs from a particular perspective is motivated by the cohesion of the constituents with other elements in the discourse. In the case of transitive verbs, the active appears when the agent is more cohesive and the passive when the patient is more cohesive.

They define cohesion in a disjunctive way and add that this definition is far from complete:

«A constituent *x* is cohesive if *x* is coreferent to another item *y* in the sentence itself or in the larger discourse; or if it is semantically related to another item *y* in the sentence or discourse, for example by showing certain semantic features; or by being antonymous to *y*; or by standing in a part-whole relation to *y*; or by being a co-member of *y* in some superclass of *y*; or if it is pragmatically related to *y*, for example by being in contrast with it; or by being evoked by it or inferrable from it; etc.»

The notion cohesion is broader than topic continuity as developed by GIVÓN (1983) (cf. 2.3 p. 10) because it includes not only coreferentiality but also other semantic and pragmatic relations and it differs from givenness in the sense that it is sensitive to both the preceding and the following discourse (RISSELADA: unpublished doc.). In order to illustrate this and to make this notion a bit more concrete, let me present the following example:

Dkc. VI, 109,8

(i) *udañcantam ca tam kupād apah kṣaṇāt prṣṭhato gatvā **pranunoda**/*

While her husband was dipping water out of the well, she went behind his back at once and pushed him.

(ii) *taṃ ca vikalaṃ skandhenoduhya deśād deśāntaraṃ paribhramantī pativratāpratītiṃ **lebhe** bahuvīdhāś ca puajāḥ /*

As she was carrying that crippled man on her shoulders wan-



dering from country to country, she received the reputation of a faithful wife and was showered with honour.

(iii) *punar avantirājānugrahād atimahatyā bhūtyā tasmin deśe nyavasat /*

Then, thanks to the goodwill of the king of Avanti, she settled in this country with immense riches.

I suppose everyone recognizes this fragment out of the Dhūmini story. The subject in the second sentence i.e. the subject of the verb *lebhe*, which isn't expressed explicitly, is a) cohesive within the sentence because it governs the participle (*paribhramantī*) and because it is the logical subject of the absolutive (*uduhyā*); b) cohesive with the subject in the preceding sentence i.e. the subject of *praṇunoda* because both are coreferential, they refer to the same entity i.e. Dhūmini and c) cohesive with the subject in the following sentence (i.e. the subject of *nyavasat*) for the very same reason. The object in sentence (ii), namely *pativratāpratītiṃ bahuvidhāś ca puṇāḥ* is new in the information structure and not relevant in the rest of the discourse, thus this constituent is not cohesive.

As this hypothesis (i.e. the active voice is chosen for when the agent is more cohesive and the passive voice when the patient is more cohesive) seemed quite plausible to me and perfectly explained the data in Latin, I was fairly optimistic about it. Eroneously!

Table 8: strenght of cohesion

	active		passive	
	ag.	pat.	ag.	pat.
no cohesion	11	51	24	31
cohesion 1	27	25	42	6
cohesion 2	39	16	30	21
cohesion 3	23	8	4	12

This table presents the strength of cohesion. Cohesion factor 1 means cohesive either within the sentence or with the preceding

or following discourse, cohesion factor 2 means a combination of two of these possibilities and of course cohesion factor 3 means cohesive with both the preceding and following discourse and within the sentence (the example above is an illustration of this).

What catches the eye immediately is that the agent of the active sentences scores very high in the strongest forms of cohesion (i.e. factor 2 and 3) in comparison with the patient subject in the passive sentences; you have 39 vs. 21 and 23 vs. 12. The number of cases where there is no cohesion points in the same direction: the agent subject is not cohesive only 11 times opposite 31 times for the patient subject. You also notice that the cohesion of the agent is much stronger than the cohesion of the patient within the active sentences whereas in the passive sentences the difference is not considerable (42 vs. 36; 30 vs. 21 and 4 vs. 12). Now, please consider table 9 which gives us an idea of the type of cohesion:

Table 9: type of cohesion

	active		passive	
	ag.	pat.	ag.	pat.
cohesion in s°	43	24	22	30
s-1a	37	9	17	20
s-1b	19	18	21	11
s-2	50	18	36	35
s+1a	26	9	15	10
s+1b	12	9	5	16
s+2	44	19	18	15
total number of cohesions	231	106	134	137

s° means cohesive within the sentence, s-1a means cohesive with the subject of the preceding sentence, s-1b means cohesive with a non-subject constituent in the preceding sentence etc. (cfr. BOLKESTEIN & RISSELADA t.a.).

In order to establish this table, I made a distinction between several types of cohesion according to the syntactic status of and the distance to the elements with whom they are cohesive. It is

obvious that if a constituent is cohesive with a constituent that bears the syntactic function of subject, the cohesion will be stronger than if there is cohesion with an object. It is also understood that if there is cohesion with an element in the immediately preceding or following sentence this cohesion is more convincing in comparison with cohesion with the larger discourse.

We record that the agent subjects outrank the patient subjects in all cases except for one (s+1b in casu: 12 vs. 16) but this is only a slight difference, isn't it? We also note that there is a huge difference between the agent and the patient in the active sentences whereas the difference is trivial in the passive sentences. The total number of cohesions shows this very clearly: the agent subject is cohesive 231 times vs. the patient 106 times, this is a difference of 125 and the patient subject 137 times vs. 134, which is a difference of only 3!

On the basis of these givens, I construed table 10, which presents the relative cohesion.

Table 10: relative cohesion

<i>active:</i>	subj. ag.	>	pat.:	72%
	subj. ag.	=	pat.:	14%
	subj. ag.	<	pat.:	14%
<i>passive:</i>	subj. pat.	>	ag.:	42%
	subj. pat.	=	ag.:	22%
	subj. pat.	<	ag.:	36%

I suppose these figures speak for themselves. As you can see in the active sentences the subject (agent) is more cohesive (>) than the patient in 72% of the cases, there is some doubt as to which constituent is more cohesive (=) in 14% of the cases and the non subject (patient) is more cohesive in the rest of them. Now, in the passive sentences, the subject (patient) is more cohesive than the non subject (agent) in only 42%, this percentage lies a good deal lower than in the active sentences (42 vs. 72) whereas the percentage of the non-subjects (agent) that are more cohesive than the subjects (patient) lies a good deal higher (36 vs. 14)!

I suppose these figures have convincingly demonstrated that in the active sentences cohesion is an important factor indeed while in the passive sentences it is manifested in a lesser degree.

### 3 CONCLUSION

As all these parameters seem very plausible — for instance it is quite reasonable that a subject constituent is more cohesive than a non-subject to guarantee the cohesion, the continuity in the discourse — one could have expected that a sort of combination of a number of them would motivate the use of a certain voice. But as you have seen, in classical Sanskrit it turned out not to be as simple as that.

Let's consider table 11 which reveals us how many factors interact in the corpussentences:

Table 11: overall picture

number of factors present	<i>active</i>	<i>passive</i>
0	0	22
1	7	28
2	10	30
3	23	15
4	23	1
5	26	3
6	11	1

This table is based on 7 factors (i.e. definiteness, humanness, empathy, syntactic priming, topicalisation, politeness, cohesion).

I adhered to an objective quantification (one factor is one point). For instance, there are 28 passive sentences where only one factor and 11 active sentences where the interaction of 6 factors has been established. In the passive sentences you see a decrescendo towards the strong combinations as opposed to a crescendo in the active sentences. The latter sentences are in-

clined to combine a number of parameters; the subject agents are often +def. and +hum. when the patients are not; in most cases they are given and topical and on top of that they are not only more times cohesive but their cohesion is usually stronger too. So the active sentences, as I said before, often correspond nicely to the expected pattern. Now, what about the passive sentences? 22 passive sentences are totally inexplicable in terms of these parameters. Of course, I cannot possibly claim that for this reason pragmatic motivation on the whole is out of the question. The factors discussed above do play a role at least in some degree (cf. table 11) but it's hard to assess their influence properly.

As I announced in the introduction, having discovered that pragmatic motivation somehow didn't tell the whole story, I started looking for another or rather additional explanation for the appearance of the passive in classical Sanskrit. Unfortunately this explanation is merely hypothetical and should thus be treated with caution.

At the time the *Daśakumāracaritam*, the text out of which I selected my corpussentences, was composed (presumably 7th century AD), Sanskrit had already lost its status of a living language used for everyday purposes, although it still was the lingua franca in those days. So Daṇḍin's native tongue must have been some sort of Middle Indo Aryan (MIA from now on) language or dialect if you please. It is generally known that these MIA languages had given up their original synthetic character to a large extent in favour of a more simplified morphological system, for instance by replacing the finite verb forms in the past tenses by the non-finite passive past participle+instrumental.

It is also known that in the later Sanskrit literature to which *Daśakumāracaritam* unmistakably belongs, the use of passive forms, particularly non-finite ones, permanently increased. This evolution has been signalled by a great number of Indologists. Speyer, for one, said:

«Sanskrit has a decided predilection for the passive voice. Since the preference is of course not limited to transitive verbs, nothing can be more common than the use of impersonal passives.» (1886:3,4)

«Im Vedischen herrscht der aktivische Ausdruck bei weitem vor,

*das Sanskrit dagegen hat eine mit der Zeit zunehmende Vorliebe für das Passivum auch von intransitiven Verben.»*

(I took over this quote from Gonda 1951:1)

None of these authors, however, puts a link between the situation in the MIA languages and the occurrence of passive forms in classical Sanskrit or offers an explanation for this evolution. Whitney even attributes the increase of passive forms to the farreaching artificiality of the language in question:

*«...and this for the most part showing a gradual depravation and incréase of artificiality and an intensification of certain undesirable features of the language — such as these of passive constructions and of participles instead of verbs, and the substitution of compounds for sentences.»* (1986:XV)

(The underlining is mine)

That Whitney calls the increase of passives 'undesirable' is hardly surprising. According to F.G. (Dig 1978:77) one normally choses the most central semantic function (i.e. the one that scores highest on the semantic function hierarchy: the agent) as the point of departure of the state of affairs<sup>3</sup>.

If in a certain language the syntactic function subject is relevant, than it's usually assigned to the agent constituent with other words one usually considers the active sentence as the unmarked and the passive sentence as the marked structure. Since, however, classical Sanskrit is overloaded with passive constructions, one can hardly maintain they are all marked.

To put it briefly: both voices co-exist in classical Sanskrit and both produce unmarked structures; the passive structures take the lion's share of the insubordinate (non-finite > finite) sentences while the active sentences prefer the matrix (finite > non-finite).

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3. S.F.H. or semantic function hierarchy: agent > goal > recipient > beneficent > instrumental > locativ > tempus.

In languages in which the subject assignment is relevant (i.e. the function subject is not automatically assigned to the first argument but may be assigned to another argument as well) the subject function can in principal be assigned to any semantic function in S.F.H. and the object function to any semantic function excepted ag.. In both cases, however, these assignments become more and more difficult as we advance through the S.F.H.

So from a diachronical point of view, the active is traditionally the most normal and unmarked construction (cf. Speyer's quote above) whereas the passive has obtained this status. One could say that classical Sanskrit that was originally an accusativistic language began to show some ergative traits i.e. some passive sentences seem to appear unmotivated as opposed to their active counterparts.

Now, just like MIA languages were possibly influenced in their evolution by indigene languages (Chatterji 1983:92), it is not excluded that classical Sanskrit got impulses to change from the surrounding languages for no literary language can remain isolated from the living spoken language.

So, I guess, it's not unlikable for an author who is a native speaker of a MIA language and thus constructs passive sentences all the time to use passive constructions in the more formalized language, Sanskrit without it being necessary to guarantee the continuity in the discourse. This would certainly explain the somewhat odd behaviour of the passive in classical Sanskrit.

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